

Wanderers clinch thriller in last minute

Wycombe Wanderers 3, Tooting 2 Report by **STUART EARP**

A GLORIOUS goal in the 90th minute captured three Rothmans Isthmian League points for Wycombe Wanderers against Tooting on Saturday in one of the most exciting games of the season.

This match had all the ingredients of a real thriller and the 1,800 who turned out at Loakes Park could not have asked for a better game to end the year's football. If we have matches like this in 1976, there will be few complaints. It was superb entertainment.

In the end Tooting, who had the lead twice, must have felt shattered by the result for I have no doubt they felt they did enough to at least earn a point. But Wanderers deserved their victory for one reason. For years they have dedicated themselves to playing pure attacking football. They continued to do so against Tooting until the very last second and it was this dedication that brought its reward in the form of that truly brilliant goal in the 90th minute.

It must also be said that Tooting contributed a great deal to this match. They did their fair share of attacking and showed they are a side capable of winning the title come the end of the season. This win on Saturday completed the double for Wycombe and not many clubs will achieve that against Tooting this term.

Technically, Saturday's game was far from perfect and three goals were results of defensive errors. In the first half particularly, some of Wycombe's passing and finishing was rank bad but after the interval those mistakes were forgotten amongst the excitement. Forgotten, too, were a couple of nasty incidents which were not in keeping with

the general spirit of the game. Dave Juneman was booked in the second half and Derek Casey could have joined him for swinging a punch at Howard Kennedy. Thankfully, football overcame these unpleasanties and the pace of the game was such that both sets of players became too involved to worry about the rough stuff.

Wanderers fielded their strongest side for this important game. Dave Bullock continuing for Ray Eaton, who is not match fit. There was one positional switch, Tony Horsemann moving to centre forward. And the Blues almost got off to a dream start when they had the ball in the net after 20 seconds. John Delaney nodded on a long throw at the near post and after Horsemann hit the underside of the bar, the ball was scrambled home. Referee Maber, however ruled out the score due to a handball.

Delaney went close with another set piece header but Tooting soon began to settle and they took the lead after 20 minutes. A long free kick was headed on by Juneman to Casey who crashed a thunderous left foot shot towards the net. John Maskell launched himself superbly to parry the drive but Alan Ives nipped in to fire the ball into the roof of the net with three defenders slow to move. Maskell must have been sickened with the goal for his save from Casey's first shot was brilliant.

The goal did Tooting's confidence the world of good and by taking a grip in midfield, they began to look the better side. Former Brighton professional Ron Howell was the general in the middle and his long raking passes kept the home defence under pressure. Although Terry Reardon, worked hard, none of the home midfield men could keep a tight rein on the Tooting man.

Ives gave the Wycombe fans an anxious moment in the 28th minute when his 25 yard kick almost caught Maskell off his line but the goalkeeper managed to tip the ball onto the upright.

At the other end Wycombe's finishing left much to be desired as Dylan Evans, Geoff Anthony and Mick Holfield blazed high over the crossbar. The closest Wycombe came to an equaliser was just half time when Bullock's long punt into the box was turned in by Anthony, but John Dunn saved well.

Wanderers' luck changed immediately after the interval. Within 60 seconds they were on level terms when Alan Berreclough, with plenty of time, changed his mind at the last minute and tried to pass back to Dunn. Evans intercepted, took the ball square and then fired home.

Four minutes later, Wanderers returned the 'Christmas spirit' when Bobby Green's miskick was allowed to pass across the box to Nick Glover.

The defence watched leaden footed as Glover turned in a shot which Maskell blocked with his legs but the Tooting man made no mistake with the rebound.

Within a minute Juneman was booked for hacking down Holfield, a necessary caution at the time to prevent the game becoming over physical.

Then, with only eight minutes of the second half gone, the Blues hit back for the second time to equalise. Horsemann cleverly jumped over a low free kick which left Evans with a clear route to goal. Dylan accelerated and rammed in a shot which struck the far upright and cannoned out onto Steve Grubb. The big Tooting centre half stood horrified as the ball boomed into his own net.

Although all three goals could be put down to errors, it was a really exciting start to the new half and the pace continued until the close. Both defences were clearly worried by the sudden goal burst and seemed more susceptible to mistakes. Of the two defences, Wycombe's looked the more steady, with Paul Birdseye and John Delaney playing particularly well.

Both sides began to string some excellent attacks together and more goals looked certain. Tooting almost got a third when Glover sprinted through but Maskell positioned himself perfectly to hold the shot. Then at the other end, Horsemann sent in an acrobatic overhead kick

which Dunn held safely. Horsemann went close again soon afterwards when Kennedy pushed the ball though the defence but 'Bodger' shot fractionally wide.

Due to a general improvement in midfield, Wanderers looked the stronger side with Holfield in particular, far more prominent in this half. But time was running out and as the match approached the last few seconds, it seemed the clubs would have to share the points. Then Wycombe struck the killer blow.

Evans received the ball, controlled and skipped a pass to Horsemann. He waited until exactly the right second to put Dylan through on-side and the Welshman took a couple of steps forward before placing the winner past Dunn.

The execution of the move was perfect and it was fitting that such a goal decided this excellent game. Referee Maber kept the fans waiting another four minutes before bringing the match to a close but Tooting were unable to reply again.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, P. Birdseye, K. Moor, J. Delaney, D. Bullock, H. Kennedy, T. Reardon, M. Holfield, G. Anthony (sub D. Alexander 78 mins), A. Horsemann, D. Evans.

TOOTING: J. Dunn, A. Berreclough, W. Smith, S. Grubb, R. Green, D. Casey, R. Howell, T. Ford, N. Glover (sub D. Dennis 87 mins), D. Juneman, A. Ives.

Referee: T. Maber (Ruilsip).

Half-time: 0-1. **Goalscorers,** Wycombe: Evans 2 (46, 90), Grubb o.g. (52); Tooting: Ives (20), Glover (50).

Official paying attendance: 1,800
approx total attendance 2,050.

ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE (up to and including 27/12/75)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enfield	24	16	4	4	52	20	52
Hendon	24	13	6	5	38	20	45
Wycombe	24	13	6	5	40	27	45
Ilford	24	13	6	5	33	23	45
Colwyn	25	12	3	10	43	27	39
Dagenham	22	12	4	6	38	39	39
Tooting	22	11	5	6	37	22	38
Slough	26	10	8	8	36	29	38
Sutton	21	10	6	8	42	25	36
Staines	22	8	7	6	26	16	34
Kings	24	10	4	10	40	54	34
Hitchin	25	9	6	10	23	33	32
L'head	21	9	5	7	35	34	32
Hayes	25	7	11	7	28	28	32
Barking	21	9	4	8	31	37	31
Oxford	23	7	6	10	38	30	27
Bishops	21	7	5	9	28	28	26
Woking	26	7	3	16	31	45	24
W'stow	20	5	4	11	23	34	19
Southall	21	4	6	11	27	38	18
L'stone	26	2	8	16	17	46	14
Clapton	24	1	1	22	8	85	4

Chelsea visit

WYCOMBE Wanderers take on a Chelsea XI at Loakes Park tomorrow (Tuesday) evening in a